

XXIX.—*Notes on a 'Catalogue of the Accipitres in the British Museum' by R. Bowdler Sharpe (1874). By J. H. GURNEY.*

[Continued from p. 84.]

IN considering the genera which are most nearly related to the Milvine group in the restricted sense of that term, and which if it be taken in a wider sense may be included in it, I would in the first instance refer to the American genus *Elanoides*, the sole species of which (*E. furcatus*), though bearing a considerable resemblance in external appearance to the *Milvi* of the Old World, possesses differences of structure which indicate that its true position is that of an isolated form, as has been pointed out by Mr. Ridgway, at p. 180 of his 'Studies of the American Falconidæ.'

I may add, with reference to this species, that its immature stage of plumage, which is not noticed in Mr. Sharpe's work, is described at page 192 of vol. iii. of Messrs. Baird, Brewer, and Ridgway's 'History of North-American Birds.'

From *Elanoides furcatus* the transition is a natural one to the little *Naclerus rioucourei* of intertropical Africa, which at first sight appears to be a miniature species of *Elanoides*, but which is in reality more closely related to the genera *Elanus* and *Gampsonyx*.

One remarkable point of agreement between the three genera *Naclerus*, *Gampsonyx*, and *Elanus* is the absence of any groove on the under surface of the claws—a peculiarity which has been pointed out by Mr. Ridgway in the article above referred to.

It is somewhat curious that the genera *Naclerus* and *Gampsonyx*, like that of *Elanoides*, contain each but a single species.

In the case of *Gampsonyx*, as in that of *Elanoides*, the differences between the immature and adult stages of plumage, though not referred to by Mr. Sharpe, are very appreciable. An immature example of *G. swainsoni*, from the Upper Amazons, which is preserved in the Norwich Museum, differs from the adult bird in the following particulars, viz. :—All the

feathers of the black cap, which extends from above the eyes to the nape, are tipped with pale fulvous, with which colour the upper nuchal collar (white in the adult) is also tinged all the feathers of the mantle are more or less distinctly tipped with rufous brown, which is brightest and widest on the hinder tertials, where it takes the place of the whit tips so conspicuous on those feathers in the adult bird; the rectrices are narrowly tipped with white, the breast, abdomen, and under wing-coverts being strongly tinged with rufescent fulvous.

As Mr. Sharpe does not mention the colour of the iris in this species, I may here note that an adult, or nearly adult, male, described in Léotaud's 'Oiseaux de la Trinidad, pp. 41 & 42, is there said to have had "cire, iris, et pattes jaunes."

I may add that the Norwich Museum possesses a specimen of *G. swainsoni* from Sta. Marta, Colombia, which is a more western locality than any of those quoted for this species by Mr. Sharpe*.

In referring next to the genus *Elanus*, I may observe that Mr. Sharpe, in his "Key to the Species" of that genus, applies the terms "inner lining of wing" and "wing-lining" to the under surface of the primaries; and I think it desirable, for the sake of guarding against any possible misapprehension, to mention that where I have used the phrase "wing-lining," I have not used it in the same sense as that in which Mr. Sharpe has, in this passage, applied it, but as designating the under wing-coverts, which seem to me to be the part of the wing to which the term "lining" most properly applies†.

Mr. Sharpe, very properly, as it seems to me, does not admit *E. minor* of Bonaparte as specifically, or even subspecifically, distinct from *E. ceruleus*; and though variations of

* Another westerly locality for this species is Tumbez, in North-western Peru (*vide* P. Z. S. 1877, p. 744.).

† The term "lining of the wing" is applied to the under wing-coverts in the article on the genus *Elanus* in Messrs. Baird, Brewer, and Ridgway's 'History of North-American Birds,' vol. iii. p. 197. On the other hand, Mr. Dresser, in his article on *E. ceruleus* in the 'Birds of Europe,' speaks of the "wing-lining" in the same sense as that in which the words are used by Mr. Sharpe.

size occur in this species, they do not seem to be of a very marked character; the length of the black patch on the wing-coverts also varies in different specimens, and more considerably so than the general dimensions.

I subjoin a summary of some measurements of this species, taken by myself, to which it may be well to premise that in the genus *Elanus* there seems to be but very little difference in the size of the sexes. Thus, in treating of *E. caeruleus* in his recent work on the birds of Ceylon, Captain Legge gives the wing-measurement in males as from 10·4 to 10·8 inches, and in females from 10·6 to 10·9; and the Norwich Museum possesses a male from Transvaal, and a female from Natal, in which the measurements of the wing and also of the tarsus are identical; whilst a still more remarkable instance is recorded in 'Stray Feathers,' vol. vii. p. 252, of a pair of these *Elani*, obtained at Furredpore in Eastern Bengal, in which the total length and wing-measurement in the male actually exceeded the corresponding dimensions in the female bird.

The under-mentioned specimens of *E. caeruleus*, which I have measured, are preserved in the British and Norwich Museums, and in the collections of Mr. Dresser and of my son, Mr. J. H. Gurney, Jun.; the measurements are given in inches and decimals*.

	Wing.	Tarsus.	Black wing-patch.
Seville (sex unknown)	10·5	1·5	4·3
Tangiers (two females)	10·4 & 10·6	1·2 & 1·1	3·3 & 2·7
River Gambia (sex unknown) . .	10·6	1·5	3·7
Accra (sex unknown)	10·6	1·3	4·5
Quanza, Portuguese possessions in W. Africa (sex unknown)	11·0	1·3	4·0
Cape of Good Hope (male)	10·9	1·1	3·5
Natal (two females)	10·65 & 10·6	1·25 & 1·2	3·8 & 3·5
Transvaal (male)	10·6	1·2	4·2
„ (three, sex unknown)	10·55–10·9	1·25	4·2–4·7
Zambesi (sex unknown)	10·1	1·3	4·1

* In this measurement I have only taken the length of the actual black patch, exclusive of the blackish-brown feathers, which often adjoin its posterior extremity.

	Wing.	Tarsus.	Black wing- patch.
Egypt (four males)	11·2-11·75	1·25-1·3	3·5-5·2
„ (two, sex unknown) . . .	11·1 & 11·4	1·25	4·9 & 4·7
Ceylon (two, sex unknown) ..	10·6 & 10·7	1·15 & 1·2	5 & 4·65
India (two, sex unknown) . . .	10·7 & 10·8	1·1 & 1·3	3·6 & 3·7
Nepal (sex unknown)	10·4	1·3	4·1
Afghanistan (sex unknown) ..	10·6	1·1	3·1
Saigon, Cochin China (sex un- known)	11·3	1·2	5·1

It will be observed that in the above list the Egyptian specimens show a somewhat larger wing-measurement than those from other localities, with the exception of that from Cochin China ; but otherwise the variations in size are not such as to indicate any marked local differences.

Mr. Sharpe, in treating of *E. hypoleucus*, refers to a specimen in the British Museum as being the type of that species ; but it will be seen, by a reference to Mr. Gould's original description (P. Z. S. 1859, p. 127), that this is a mistake, the bird there described by Mr. Gould being a fully adult male obtained by Mr. Wallace at Macassar, and now preserved in the Norwich Museum. This species, which, though nearly allied to *E. cæruleus*, is certainly distinct, at least subspecifically, has an oceanic range, which is particularized in Mr. Sharpe's volume, and which is geographically intermediate between the eastern limit of *E. cæruleus* and the most northerly appearance of *E. axillaris*. Mr. Sharpe gives the habitat of the last-named species as Australia only ; but, according to Mr. Gould, it occurs as far northwards as Java*, where, however, it appears to be much scarcer than *E. hypoleucus* ; and, in confirmation of Mr. Gould's assertion, I may mention that the Norwich Museum possess a nearly adult specimen which was brought to this country by the celebrated traveller Madame Pfeiffer, who obtained it (as I was informed at the time) during her visit to the island of Java : in this specimen the measurements of the wing, tail, and external black wing-patch slightly exceed those of any Australian example which I have examined ; and the grey on the back is

* Vide Gould's 'Birds of Asia,' sub *Elanus hypoleucus*.

somewhat darker than is usual in Australian specimens, with which, however, it appears to agree in all other respects.

The two Australian *Elani* (*E. axillaris* and *E. scriptus*) are both remarkable for the great paleness of the grey tints of the upper surface; and this circumstance appears to me to constitute the most marked and constant distinction between *E. axillaris* and the American *E. leucurus*, which (as the later-described species) should, I think, be considered a subspecies of *E. axillaris*. It ought, however, to be observed that some slight individual variations in the tint of grey on the back occur in both *E. axillaris* and *E. leucurus*, sometimes producing a greater approximation between the two in such examples than exists between the bulk of average specimens of the two races.

Messrs. Baird, Brewer, and Ridgway, in their 'History of North-American Birds,' vol. iii. p. 196, devote an article to the different "species and races" of the genus *Elanus*, in which, under the head of "*E. leucurus*," the following diagnosis is given:—

"Above deep bluish ash, with the inner webs of the secondaries appreciably paler, sometimes abruptly white; wing 11·60–12·65, tail 6·80–7·80, culmen ·65–·80, tarsus 1·20–1·50, middle toe ·94–1·20. *Hab.* Tropical and Subtropical America.—Var. *leucurus*. Above, pale ash, with the inner webs of the secondaries hardly, or not at all appreciably paler than the outer; wing 11·00–12·50, tail 6·20–7·00, culmen ·70–·77, tarsus 1·10–1·66, middle toe 1·05–1·08. *Hab.* Western Australia.—Var. *axillaris* Occasional specimens of *E. leucurus* occur, however, in which there is little difference in tint between the two webs of the secondaries."

Mr. Sharpe, in his "Key to the Species" of the genus *Elanus*, gives a somewhat different diagnosis between *E. axillaris* and *E. leucurus*, which I will also quote.

"Black patch on under wing-coverts very large, the greater series dark ashy grey, like the wing-lining. . . *axillaris*.
Black patch on under wing-coverts less, and confined to a small patch on the outermost greater coverts, the rest of the series white slightly tinged with grey . . . *leucurus*."

These differences do not appear to me to be entirely constant; and there is still more variation as regards the external wing-patch, with reference to which Mr. Sharpe remarks, in his description of *E. leucurus*, "least and median wing-coverts black, but not forming so large a black shoulder as in the other species."

Mr. Dresser, in his article on *E. cæruleus* in the 'Birds of Europe,' makes some remarks on the other species of the genus, and with reference to the two now under consideration agrees with Mr. Sharpe's view as regards the black patch on the under wing-coverts, and also adds, "judging from my specimens, *E. leucurus* has a somewhat longer tail;" this last characteristic, I find, holds good, on an average, of the individuals of the two races which I have examined.

The following measurements, in inches and tenths, have been taken by myself, and may, perhaps, be here inserted with advantage; but I ought to add that in four of the specimens of *E. leucurus* included in the list I was unable to measure the length of the inner wing-patch, on account of the birds being mounted*.

	Tail.	Wing.	Tarsus.	Outer wing-patch.	Inner wing-patch.
<i>Elanus axillaris.</i>					
From Java (Norwich Museum)	6·8	12·7	1·4	5·2	2·3
Australia (ten specimens).	5·7	11·5	1·2	2·9	1·3
	to 6·3	to 12·3	to 1·5	to 5·0	to 2·3
<i>Elanus leucurus.</i>					
California (seven specimens).	6·4	12·2	1·3	3·6	1·7
	to 7·3	to 13·3	to 1·5	to 5·5	to 2·9
Mexico (two specimens).	6·9	12·2	1·4	4·7	1·7
	& 7·4	& 12·7	& 1·3	& 5·0	
Venezuela (two males).	6·7	12·5	1·3	5·4	2·1
	& 6·6			& 5·2	& 2·0

* The specimens examined are preserved in the British, Cambridge, and Norwich Museums, and in the collections of Messrs. Salvin and Godman, and of Mr. Dresser.

	Tail.	Wing.	Tarsus.	Outer wing-patch.	Inner wing-patch.
British Guiana (two specimens).	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} 6.3 \\ \& \\ 6.2 \end{array} \right\}$	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} 12.2 \\ \& \\ 11.8 \end{array} \right\}$	1.3	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} 3.7 \\ \& \\ 3.9 \end{array} \right\}$	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} 2.0 \\ \& \\ 1.7 \end{array} \right\}$
Bahia (two specimens).	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} 5.9 \\ \& \\ 6.4 \end{array} \right\}$	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} 11.5 \\ \& \\ 12.2 \end{array} \right\}$	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} 1.3 \\ \& \\ 1.2 \end{array} \right\}$	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} 4.8 \\ \& \\ 3.6 \end{array} \right\}$	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} 2.0 \\ \& \\ 1.5 \end{array} \right\}$
Chili (five specimens).	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} 6.5 \\ \text{to} \\ 6.8 \end{array} \right\}$	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} 12.0 \\ \text{to} \\ 12.2 \end{array} \right\}$	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} 1.2 \\ \text{to} \\ 1.4 \end{array} \right\}$	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} 4.9 \\ \text{to} \\ 5.0 \end{array} \right\}$	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} 1.4 \\ \text{to} \\ 1.9 \end{array} \right\}$
Straits of Magellan.	6.9	12	1.2	4.9	..

The genus *Ictinia*, though included by Mr. Sharpe in his "Subfamily *Falconinæ*," is so closely allied to *Elanus*, that I am disposed to consider it also entitled to a place amongst the outlying members of the Milvine group in its wider aspect, and as connecting that group with the true Falcons, and especially with the Hobbies.

Of the two species comprised in the genus *Ictinia*, the southern (*I. plumbea*) is by far the more abundant in the collections sent to this country, and appears to be especially numerous in British Guiana; an interesting note on its habits will be found at page 43 of Léotaud's 'Birds of Trinidad.'

The more northern species of the genus (*I. mississippiensis*) is decidedly scarce in the Museums of Great Britain, though it is said by Messrs. Baird, Brewer, and Ridgway*, to be an "exceedingly abundant summer-bird on the prairies of Southern Illinois." The same authors give as the habitat of this species "Central Mexico and Southern United States;" but Mr. Salvin states that it ranges as far south as Guatemala; and a specimen from Coban is recorded in 'The Ibis' for 1861, p. 355.

The American authors to whose work I have just referred, supply an excellent account of this species, including a description of its immature dress, in which stage it has not been described by Mr. Sharpe.

The ramifications of Milvine affinity extend to and include some other genera, more abnormal than those which we have

* *Vide* 'History of North-American Land-Birds,' vol. iii. p. 204.

hitherto considered; and to one of these, the genus *Rosthamus**, I would now refer.

The birds of this genus are especially characterized by a bill of extraordinarily slender proportions, in which the hook terminating the upper mandible is prolonged in a most remarkable manner, forming an admirable tool for extracting from their shells the freshwater mollusks on which these birds in great measure subsist, whilst a similar slenderness of proportion is observable in the long and sharp talons with which their feet are armed.

Messrs. Baird, Brewer, and Ridgway† apply the specific name of *sociabilis* (Vieillot, ex Azara) to the species which Mr. Sharpe describes under the name of *leucopygus* proposed for it by Spix; and in this, I think, they are right, as it appears to me that both these names refer to the same species, and “*sociabilis*,” being the older, of course has priority.

The bird described by Azara, and from his description re-described by Vieillot in the ‘Nouveau Dictionnaire,’ vol. xviii. p. 318, under the name of *Herpetotheres sociabilis*, was immature, which would make it difficult to decide to which species it should be referred, were it not for the fact that Azara made his collections in the neighbourhood of the river Paraná, and that in this district of the province of Buenos Ayres the *R. leucopygus* of Spix is known to occur.

The late Mr. Durnford, writing in ‘The Ibis’ for 1877 respecting the birds of Buenos Ayres, and especially as to his collections in the neighbourhood of a branch of the Paraná, mentions this species, on page 188, as “resident and not uncommon;” and an adult specimen procured by that gentleman at Lujan-bridge, on the Campana railway, Buenos Ayres, is now in the possession of Messrs. Salvin and Godman‡.

* The name is thus spelled in the original description of the genus in Lesson's ‘Traité,’ p. 55; in Mr. Sharpe's volume the spelling adopted is *Rosthamus*.

† Vide ‘Birds of North America,’ vol. iii. p. 208.

‡ The following is copied from Mr. Durnford's ticket attached to this specimen:—

“♂. Iris rich crimson, cere orange, legs and feet darker orange; stomach full of water-mollusks.”

The probability that the immature bird described by Azara was of the same species as that for which Spix subsequently proposed the name of *leucopygus*, seems therefore to be sufficiently strong to warrant this appellation being merged in that of *sociabilis* as a prior synonym.

I am not aware that this species extends further southward than the Argentine Republic, on the eastern side of the American continent; to the west it occurs as far south as Bolivia and Peru, specimens from each of those States being preserved in the Norwich Museum; its northern range extends to Mexico; but its exact limit in that direction appears not to have been very accurately ascertained. Mr. Sharpe also includes in the habitat of this species "Florida and the Antilles;" but in his addenda, at page 459, he notes that "Mr. Ridgway (B. N. Am.) separates the Florida bird as *R. sociabilis*, var. *plumbeus*."

I have not seen a specimen of *R. plumbeus*; but from the description given by Mr. Ridgway and his colleagues in the article above referred to, it would appear to be a distinct subspecies peculiar to Cuba and Southern Florida.

A much more distinct species is *R. hamatus* (Temm. ex Ill.), which is apparently restricted to the more northern countries of South America, and which, so far as I know, has never been obtained to the north of the Isthmus of Panama.

The museums of this country contain many examples of *R. sociabilis*=*leucopygus*; but I do not know of a single specimen in any of them either of *R. plumbeus* or of *R. taniurus* (to be subsequently mentioned), and but one of *R. hamatus*, an adult female from Remedios in Antioquia, which is in the possession of Messrs. Salvin and Godman, who have kindly given me the opportunity of examining it.

R. hamatus is readily distinguished from *R. sociabilis*=*leucopygus* by its smaller size, much shorter tail, more plumbeous coloration, and the entire absence of white from all parts of the plumage; it is probably the same species as that described in Mr. Sharpe's volume under the name *sociabilis*; but the specimen from Remedios, above referred to, has the

tail entirely black, instead of its being "grey with a broad terminal band of black," as described by Mr. Sharpe, in which particular it seems to agree with Temminck's figure in the *Planches Coloriées*, pl. 61.

The description contained in the letterpress which accompanies Temminck's plate evidently refers to another species, probably to *R. sociabilis* = *leucopygus*, as it states that "la base de la queue et les couvertures de dessous sont blanchâtres."

The specimen figured by Temminck was in the Leyden Museum*, and apparently agreed with the example of the whole-coloured species described under the name of *Buteo hamatus* of Illiger, from a Brazilian specimen in the collection of Baron Laugier, in vol. iii. p. 1223 of the '*Tableau Encyclopédique et Méthodique*' of Bonnaterre and Vieillot, published in 1823. This was also the year of the publication of the part of Temminck's and Laugier's '*Planches Coloriées*' that contained the figure above referred to.

I have taken the following measurements (in inches and tenths) from the specimen of *R. hamatus* in the collection of Messrs. Salvin and Godman:—

	in.
Culmen, without the cere	1·4
Wing	11·7
Tail at the centre	4·9
„ „ outer rectrices	5·1
Tarsus	1·7
Middle toe <i>s. u.</i>	1·5

The following note has been attached to the skin by the collector, "♀. Iris orange; food fish."

Messrs. Baird, Brewer, and Ridgeway (*l. c.*) appear to refer to *R. hamatus* a specimen brought from the Amazons by Lieut. Herndon, which differs from Messrs. Salvin and Godman's example, and also from Temminck's figure, in having the "tail perfectly even, with an obscurely indicated narrow in-

* Compare footnote to Temminck's article on his "*Falco hemidactylus*," published in the first livraison of his work, in which he says, "Pour éviter en chaque article des répétitions inutiles, on est prévenu que la première collection nommée est toujours celle où se trouve l'individu qui a servi de modèle à nos '*Planches Coloriées*.'"

errupted band of dark plumbeous across its middle portion ;” and they likewise refer to the same species a specimen in the collection of the Boston Society, respecting which they remark that “ it has the bands on the tail more conspicuous than the last-named example, and agrees with *R. tæniurus* of Cassin.”

Not having seen either of the above-mentioned specimens, nor yet the type specimen of *R. tæniurus*, I am unable to offer an opinion as to whether they are, or are not, distinct from the true *R. hamatus* ; but Mr. Sharpe's description of the type specimen of *R. tæniurus* appears to indicate a distinct species.

With the kind assistance of Mr. Salvin I have drawn up the following list of synonyms of the different species of *Rostrhamus*, from which I have omitted all such citations as appear to me to be of too doubtful a character to admit of satisfactory identification ; the order in which the species are arranged accords, as far as possible, with that adopted by Mr. Sharpe :—

1. *ROSTRHAMUS HAMATUS*.

Falco hamatus, Temm. ex Illiger, Pl. Col. i. pl. 61, and probably pl. 231 (1823).

Buteo hamatus, Bonn. et Vieill. Enc. Méth. iii. p. 1223 (1823).

**Ibycter sociabilis*, Schl. Mus. P. B. *Polybori*, p. 7 (1862).

Ibycter sociabilis, Schl. Revue, p. 138 (1873).

**Rostrhamus hamatus*, Baird, Brewer, and Ridgway, Birds of North America, iii. p. 209 (1874).

**Rosthramus sociabilis*, Sharpe, Cat. Accipitres, p. 327 (1874).

[The citations marked with an asterisk in the foregoing list refer wholly or in part to specimens showing transverse bars upon the tail, which may possibly prove to be specifically distinct.]

2. *ROSTRHAMUS TÆNIURUS*.

Rostrhamus tæniurus, Cab. J. f. O. 1854, p. 80.

R. tæniurus, Schl. & Salv. Nomencl. p. 121 (1873).

Rostrhamus tenuirus, Sharpe, Cat. Accipitres, p. 328 (1874).

3. *ROSTRHAMUS SOCIABILIS*.

Gavilan del Estero sociabile, Azara, Apunt. i. p. 84 (1802); Hartl. Index Azara, p. 2 (1847).

Herpetotheres sociabilis, Vieill. N. Diet. xviii. p. 318 (ex Azara) (1817).

Falco hamatus, Temm. Pl. Col. text to pl. 61 (1823).

Cymindis leucopygus, Spix, Av. Bras. p. 7. pl. 2 (1824).

Falco hamatus, Max. Beitr. Naturg. Bras. iii. p. 182 (1830).

Rostrhamus niger, Less. Traité, p. 56 (1831).

Rostrhamus sociabilis, D'Orb. Voy. Amér. Mérid. Ois. p. 73 (1847).

Rostrhamus hamatus, Burm. Th. Bras. iii. p. 46 (1856).

Rostramus hamatus, Burm. La Plata-Reise, ii. p. 435 (1861).

Rostrhamus hamatus, Léot. Ois. Trinid. p. 31 (1866).

Ibycter leucopygus, Schl. Mus. P. B. Polybori, p. 8 (1862); id. Revue, p. 138 (1873).

Rostrhamus sociabilis and *R. leucopygus*, Scl. & Salv. Nomencl. p. 121 (1873).

Rostrhamus sociabilis, var. *sociabilis*, Baird, Brewer, and Ridgway, Birds of N. America, iii. pp. 208, 209 (1874).

Rostrhamus leucopygus, Sharpe, Cat. Accipitres, p. 328 (1874).

Subspecies A. *Rostrhamus plumbeus*.

Rostrhamus hamatus, Gundlach, Journal für Orn. 1854, p. lxxx.

Rostrhamus sociabilis, Cass. Birds of California and Texas p. 107 (1855); Baird, Cassin, & Lawrence, Birds of N. America, p. 38, pl. 65; Coues, Key N. Am. Birds, p. 211 (1872); Maynard, Birds of Florida, pl. 1. (1872).

Rostrhamus sociabilis, var. *plumbeus*, Baird, Brewer, and Ridgway, Birds of N. America, iii. pp. 208, 209 (1874); Sharpe, Cat. Accipitres, p. 459, ex Ridgway (1874).

[To be continued.]